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re. file

30 December 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: NIE 11-14-63: CAPABILITIES OF THE SOVIET GENERAL
PURPOSE FORCES, 1963-1969

BACKGROUND

1. This estimate is a successor to last year's NIE 11-14-62, "Capabilities of the Soviet Theater Forces." As the new title implies, the estimate has been expanded in scope and now covers all Soviet military forces not performing strategic attack and strategic defense functions. Because of high level interest in Soviet general purpose forces, subjects treated only in general terms in last year's estimate have been addressed in considerable detail. Much of the detail appears in Annexes to be distributed by tomorrow.

SUBSTANCE

2. The draft contains many important judgments which are either modifications from previous estimates or are newly-reached this year. Among the most important are:

a. New estimates of the probable numbers of Soviet line divisions, and of the proportions maintained at various levels of readiness. (See Conclusions C and D.)

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b. New judgments as to the levels of divisional equipment and as to the adequacy of the combat and service support elements backing up the force. (See Conclusions D and E.)

c. A new distinction between the Soviet personnel actually employed in theater forces, and those employed in general support of the entire military establishment. (See Conclusion C.)

d. More specific estimates on several factors bearing directly on the military threat to NATO, e.g., the likely size and composition of Soviet fronts and armies, and of a Bloc striking force after a period of reinforcement. (See Conclusion J and paras. 26-30.)

RESERVATIONS

3. There is only one known reservation to this estimate by any of the agencies. ACSI/USAF reserves to the judgment concerning future Soviet anti-submarine warfare capabilities appearing in the last sentence of paragraph 113, page 72. The Air Force position, inherited from previous estimates, is that there may be marked improvement in Soviet ASW capabilities over the next several years. The rest of the community continues to believe that Soviet ASW capabilities will remain very limited.

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4. If no additional dissents are registered, this year's estimate will reflect much improved agreement on the subject of Soviet general purpose forces. ACSI/USAF dissented to the entire summary and conclusions of last year's estimate, as well as to much of the discussion.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

SHERMAN KENT
Chairman